A Month of Blessings

One of the qualities of human nature that Islam encourages people to uphold is generosity. The need to be generous towards family, friends, neighbors, strangers and even enemies, is mentioned repeatedly throughout the Quran and the authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him. There is no better time to talk about generosity then in the Islamic month of Ramadan.

These are the last days of Ramadan 2009 for Muslims across the globe. Consequently, Muslims are examining their lives and asking themselves if their day-to-day actions are pleasing to their Creator. The intense, devotion of Ramadan has caused the believers to examine their hearts and minds.

Well known as a month of fasting, those new to Islam have discovered that Ramadan is also a month of charity and kindness. The fasting days and prayer-filled nights have softened hearts and created ripples of compassion and generosity. This month of devotion arrived quickly, settled softly, and God's blessings, mercy, and forgiveness descended. Ramadan's blessings have welled into a river of generosity.

"The Prophet, may God praise him, was the most generous amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Gabriel (angel) visited him, and Gabriel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet used to recite the Quran to Gabriel, and when Gabriel met him, he used to be more generous than a fast wind (which spreads rain and other blessings)." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Throughout the 29/30 days of fasting, Muslims give generously. They reach deep into their pockets and give to charities, and those in need, both openly, and secretly. However, charity in Islam is not only by giving money. It is any act of kindness or generosity given with an open heart and a desire to please God. Charity is something as simple as a smile or as grand a gesture as building a school or a hospital; charity is also every kind or generous act in between.

Muslims are encouraged to be generous at all times, however Ramadan serves as a reminder. When the worries of the world and the trials of life are overwhelming frail human beings tend to forget that God has provided blessings too numerous to count. Ramadan reminds us that these blessings are not meant to be clutched to the chest or hoarded away. God expects us to be generous and spend out of what He has provided.

God is *Al Kareem*, the most generous. Everything originates from Him and everything will eventually return to Him, it therefore makes sense to consider our possessions and wealth as trusts. We are obligated to preserve, protect, and ultimately share whatever we have been provided with.

"Say: "Truly, my Lord blesses the provision for whom He wills of His slaves, and also restricts it for him, and whatsoever you spend of anything (in God's Cause), He will

replace it. And He is the Best of providers." (Quran 34:39)

Throughout Ramadan Muslims look to the examples of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, and his companions and contemplate the true meaning of generosity. It does not mean to give away something that you no longer require. It means to give of those things that you love and desire or in many cases even need.

Aisha (the wife of the Prophet) said, "A lady, along with her two daughters came to me asking for some alms, but she found nothing with me except one date which I gave to her and she divided it between her two daughters." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

The men and women around Prophet Muhammad understood the true value of generosity. They recognized that kind and generous acts are an investment in the future. Our good deeds, thoughtful words, and acts of random kindness will be rewarded abundantly in the hereafter. Whatever money we spend for the sake of pleasing God will be returned to us many times over. Whatever possessions we give freely, will be replaced, if not in this life, in the Hereafter.

While generosity is a virtuous act at any time of the year, during Ramadan our good deeds and acts of kindness and generosity will be rewarded many times over. It is a month of mercy, when God allows us to reap rewards that far outweigh any sins we may have accumulated throughout the year. Ramadan is a month filled with reminders of God's generosity, kindness, and forgiveness. God forgives the faults and sins of humankind even though they may be as numerous as the froth of the sea,[1] and His forgiveness and mercy are not restricted to Ramadan.

However, this month, the month that contains a day better than 1000 months spent in worship **(Quran 97:1-5)** is sign of God's love for humankind. Ramadan is a time when believers set aside 30 days for special devotion and generosity. The fasting of Ramadan reminds the believers that the world is filled with people who are unable to find enough food or drink for their needs. Ramadan is a chance for the believers to be generous with their time, their wealth, and their possessions.

Generosity and random acts of kindness truly make the heart happy. Any one, who has given from their wealth or possessions with a pure heart, wanting only to please God,knows just how joyful these acts can be. However, what of those who have not even one dollar to spare? God's generosity knows no bounds therefore even in the direst circumstances human beings are able to be generous.

The people came to the Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, and asked, "If someone has nothing to give, what will he do?" He said, "He should work with his hands and benefit himself and also give in charity (from what he earns)." The people further asked, "If he cannot find even that?" He replied, "He should help the needy who appeal for help." Then the people asked, "If he cannot do that?" He replied, "Then he should perform good deeds and keep away from evil deeds and this will be regarded as charitable deeds." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

Ramadan is known as the month of fasting, Ramadan is a gift from God, a manifestation of His mercy and reminder of human kind's inherent goodness. Ramadan is the month of charity and generosity.